

THE FLUXUS NEWSPAPER 1964–1979

edited by George Brecht and
Fluxus Editorial Council for Fluxus
Primary Information (\$20)

Fluxus has been the moniker for a group of artists based mostly in New York City, with compatriots in Europe and Japan, that coalesced in the late 1950s. Their esthetic descended from Dada and John Cage, as they worked in music, visual art, literature, and especially performances—at first attended by a choice few, though eventually memorialized in art writing and scholarship. Respecting Cage’s demand of freedom in choosing artistic materials, Fluxus eschewed heaviness with work that counted audacity and comedy among its intentions.

The leader and most brilliant exemplar of Fluxus was George Maciunas (1931–1977), a Lithuanian who’d come to the U.S. after World War II and initially trained as an architect at first-rank American universities. In addition to organizing and helping his colleagues, he did many things in his own name, some ephemeral and others permanent, like his publishing. *The Fluxus Newspaper 1964–1979* brings together scarce issues of one of these projects, most only a few pages long, from nearly fifty years ago, all bound together in a single oversized book.

An inventive designer, Maciunas used the larger printed newspaper page as a field for various elements, both visual and verbal, and employing different typefaces as well; the book’s cover exemplifies this departure from convention. A second innovation was the seemingly unlimited variety of materials on a single page, ranging from abstract designs to pseudo-news clipping to historic photographs to price lists for other items that Maciunas was publishing. Look again at the cover—the disparities among the items make



many Fluxus pages funny, as indeed was Maciunas himself.

On the front page of February 1964 are five vertical columns with these blocks: a headlined news story about mosquito extermination; “Latest News” above an array of five-digit numerals; more news about the complaints of women wearing girdles at high altitudes; a defaced one-dollar bill; a thumbnail about “knots”; a “curve” street sign, “WOW!”; a short Scottish news article about “yeggs” (burglars) locking themselves in a “Ladies’ Room”; a current price list for Fluxus editions; another vertical thumbnail photo of a 19th-century West Coast bean dealer who resembles Maciunas; the reproduction of an ancient patent for a “saluting device” hat; and much, much else, again all within a single page.

Another whole page of this book is devoted to George Brecht’s legendary conceptual texts, with horizontal thumbnails each less than a few lower-case words long, nearly all of them incorporating the word “page”: Examples include “spit on this page,” “eat something on this page,” “turn 14 pages slowly,” “hide this page,” “write as much as you can on this page,” “listen five minutes before turning this page,” “astonish someone quickly with this page,” etc. In the middle is a blank thumbnail, literally an empty page, that implicitly enhances the others.

One section of this book has first a recto and then a two-page spread with dozens of thumbnails of several Fluxus performances in 1969 and 1970, all accompanied by a numbered sidebar in Maciunas’s signature sans-serif typeface in which individuals and details are identified. Therefore, within this book’s eighty unenumerated pages are really ten times as many distinct blocks of printed matter. As pages offer different configurations, merely flipping from a recto to a verso often offers surprise; anyone reading through this book for a second or even a third time will discover marvelous blocks that he or she missed on first reading.

The promotion for this anthology lists all the contributors, many of whose names are remembered a decade later, reminding us that few reprints from any historic periodical can offer such a distinguished exhaustive list: “Ay-O,

Carol Bergé, Joseph Beuys, Elaine Bloedow, George Brecht, Christo, Philip Corner, Walter De Maria, Willem de Ridder, Bern Erismann, Nye Ffarrabas [participating as Bici Forbes], Robert Filliou, Henry Flynt, Ken Friedman, Carolyn Krumm, Heinz Gappmayr, Eugen Gomringer, Raymond Hains, Dick Higgins, Geoffrey Hendricks, Jon Hendricks, Alice Hutchins, Tatsu Izumi, Ray Johnson, Joe Jones, Allan Kaprow, Milan Knížak, Alison Knowles, Arthur Köpcke, Takehisa Kosugi, Ruth Krauss, Philip Krumm, György Ligeti, George Maciunas, Angus MacLise, Jackson Mac Low, Larry Miller, Peter Moore, Hans Nordenström, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, James Riddle, Dieter Roth, Takako Saito, Mieko Shiomi, Tomas Schmit, Daniel Spoerri, Christer Strömholm, Yasunao Tone, Stan VanDerBeek, Ben Vautier, Jacques Villeglé, Wolf Vostell, Yoshimasa Wada, Robert Watts, Emmett Williams, William S. Wilson, La Monte Young, and Marian Zazeela.”

Few other periodicals, in literature or in art, offer such a comprehensive inventory decades later, and with materials no less deviant than they were several decades ago, *The Fluxus Newspaper 1964–1979* is a treasure, a monument to the continuing life of an enduring artistic movement.

—Richard Kostelanetz